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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001165

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER PINR SU

SUBJECT: BASHIR ADVISOR: SUDAN AT END OF TETHER WITH U.S.

Classified By: CDA Alberto Fernandez, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

At the End of the Tether

¶1. (C) Meeting with CDA Fernandez on July 25, Presidential Advisor Ghazi Salaheddin mused about the deterioration of the U.S.-Sudan bilateral relationship. Recalling the last 18 years of National Congress Party (NCP) rule in Sudan, Salaheddin said that Khartoum was at "the end of its tether" in dealing with the U.S. Sudan had made progress in its relationship with the U.S. after it "became sensitized to the negative affect of terrorism on Islam" and began to cooperate on security. Soon after, however, Sudan began to feel that its dialogue with the U.S. was "directed by opportunistic, narrow needs--Sudan was to be used." He cited frequent leaks in the U.S. press about Sudan's counter-terrorism cooperation, which aimed at "tarnishing Sudan's image with the Islamists." This frustration had solidified after the Machakos Protocol, which Sudan had perceived as a break-through as it lead to the CPA. Instead, little had changed in bilateral relations, reinforcing Khartoum's sense that "we're damned if you do, damned if you don't," according to Salaheddin.

¶2. (C) This sense later intensified. "When we were negotiating the final phases of Naivasha and Darfur blew up, it was obvious to us that the Americans and the Europeans were not at all interested because they didn't want to jeopardize the negotiations," he said. Salaheddin observed a pattern in the relationship between "strong" and "weak" states: Weak countries know more about strong nations and pursue an interest in understanding how policy and government function in more powerful states. Strong countries, however, lack the interest and will to understand weaker nations. The U.S. did not appreciate Sudan's internal and external complexity, with a plethora of ethnic groups, porous borders with nine countries, and a history of uncontrolled migration from across the Sahel. Salaheddin compared Sudan to other countries in the region, which had "love-hate" relationships with the U.S. While they admired the U.S. for its advanced technology and the cultivation of knowledge, Sudanese and many others in the third world had a perception that "this giant is being directed by minorities that are not as wise as they should be."

Actions Matter

¶3. (C) CDA Fernandez responded that the U.S. had reached the end of its tether with Sudan as well and that both countries

were "working against the clock" to prevent a further decline in the relationship. The U.S. and Sudan viewed each other through two different lenses, which had set them on a "dangerous course." Sudan viewed the U.S. through the lens of Israel, Iraq, and Palestine. Many in the U.S. viewed Sudan through the lens of Rwanda, Kosovo, and Bosnia and was unwilling to ignore mass human suffering. The Sudanese Government must realize that it is perceived as "tricking, lying, delaying." He urged Sudan to fight the "impression of obstruction" and said that Khartoum should think of ways that it could cooperate with the U.S. rather than oppose it. "It's important to break the cycle of mutual recriminations before it gets out of control."

¶4. (C) CDA encouraged Sudan to resist the temptation of thinking "actions won't matter" and allowing others "to define your reality for you." An improvement in the security situation in Darfur through the UN/AU hybrid force would provide the opportunity for reconstruction and development, which would be beneficial to the Darfuris and to the Government. The international community could then concentrate on improving Darfur's infrastructure rather than monitoring violence in the area.

¶5. (C) The Presidential Advisor described President Bashir's recent trip to Darfur as a "good offensive move" on our part to give focus to the future of the region. He said that the government realized that the internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps had become "breeding centers for resentment and dissension." Bashir himself recognized that tribal leaders "were giving way to a more militant yet effective younger generation." CDA Fernandez asked if the Sudanese Government encouraged IDPs to speak for themselves. "Yes, this is the policy," said Salaheddin. "If the IDPs can speak out, they will overtake people like Abdulwahid." While a political

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deal for Darfur was necessary, the breakdown in the relationship among the "population groups" would have to be addressed. "There must be a process of healing," said Salaheddin, who admitted that the "IDPs hate us." The IDPs' priorities, however, were more reasonable than those of many Darfur political leaders. Salaheddin dismissed allegations of the Government resettling Arab tribes in Darfur. "This wouldn't work even if we tried," he said, noting it was impossible to guarantee how they would vote in 2009.

Need for (Strategic) Dialogue

¶6. (C) Salaheddin emphasized the virtue of continued dialogue--on strategic issues rather than day to day accusations--though noted that the U.S and Sudan "had not cracked that nut in the last 18 years." "I am a believer in dialogue and strategic thinking, which is a rare commodity these days," he added. CDA Fernandez suggested that Salaheddin consider a visit to Washington because a lot had changed since his last visit in 1992. While positive, Salaheddin joked that he would need assurances that he would not be arrested as he had met with Osama bin Laden on two occasions: once when bin Laden "had wanted to get to know" Salaheddin and again just before his forced departure from Khartoum.

FERNANDEZ